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Clustered affordable housing is better than having none at all

PR
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Given the desperate lack of affordable housing in Summit County, it is surprising that the Snyderville Basin Planning Commission, this week, gave representatives of the Newpark Town Center a cold shoulder as they presented a proposal for 38 units of deed-restricted affordable housing within their development near Kimball Junction.

Some of the planning commissioners criticized the plan saying the units were too isolated from the rest of the development.

We say, "get real."

Thanks to the robust Park City economy, Summit County has a problem that most communities around the country would be delighted to share. We have jobs, lots of jobs. However, due in part to the lack of affordable housing, there are too few bodies to fill them.

Park City and Summit County government officials have tried to encourage and, in many cases, require developers to include low-cost housing options in their projects, but those efforts have met with mixed success.

It seems that each time affordable housing is introduced to an area it arouses controversy. Citing concerns about density, traffic impacts and protecting their property values, existing neighborhoods have become adept at blocking efforts to "integrate" affordable housing projects into established residential zones.

At Newpark, the county has an opportunity to approve an affordable housing component before the surrounding neighborhoods are built out enough to resist it. And in light of the number of employee-hungry businesses under

construction at the Junction, every unit will be needed.

In this case, the proposed site at Newpark has many attributes that outweigh the project's perceived separation from the rest of the development. According to the county's planning director, the apartments would be located near public transit, trails and recreation. That would be nice perk for potential employees in the Park City area.

The need for affordable housing should never be an excuse to approve shoddy development or excessive density, but any developer, especially those like Newpark, who have a solid history of contributing to the community, should be praised and encouraged.

Hopefully, the planning commissioners who initially rejected Newpark's proposal will have a change of heart before the matter comes up for a vote.

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